

Investigating the relationship between generational work attitudes and nursing practice in the special care units in the selected hospital in Bulacan.

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ABSTRACT

High-acuity Special Care Units such as ICU, OR, HD, and ER in Bulacan rely on a four-generation nursing workforce with distinct professional attitudes and clinical styles. Understand how generational shifts impact workplace values, communication, and conflict management to enhance staff retention and patient care quality. Non-experimental, descriptive-correlational study examining generational attributes and clinical practice without variable manipulation. The scope of the study includes the study settings, sampling procedures, and ethical standards to ensure data integrity across SCUs. The SCU workforce is predominantly young and early-career, mostly Gen Z and Millennials. Nurses scored highest in technological adaptability, feedback orientation, interprofessional communication, technical competence, and patient safety/advocacy, though long-term organizational commitment remains moderate. A statistically significant, moderate positive correlation exists between generational work attitudes and overall nursing practice. However, regression analysis shows that age alone is not a strong predictor—attitudes are more strongly shaped by clinical experience and organizational culture. Ultimately, the positive correlation between work attitudes and nursing practice supports the proposed Generational Synergy Program to enhance retention, collaboration, and care quality in high-acuity settings.

Keywords: - Generational work attitudes, nursing practice, special care units, Bulacan hospitals, multi-generational workforce

INTRODUCTION

To investigate multi-generational communication friction among nurses in Special Care Units (SCUs) and mitigate its direct impact on patient safety and clinical outcomes. To identify how contrasting worldviews—such as senior nurses favoring rigid hierarchy versus younger nurses preferring flat authority structures—create communication gaps in high-stakes SCUs (ICU, OR, Hemodialysis, ER). This study evaluates how intergenerational workplace conflict moves beyond standard HR concerns to actively affect healthcare quality and patient safety. It addresses workforce dynamics tailored to Bulacan's rapidly urbanizing healthcare landscape. It aims to provide insights and strategies to bridge communication divides in fast-paced, high-stress clinical environments.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to evaluate generational differences in work attitudes among Special Care Unit (SCU) nurses at a selected hospital in Bulacan. Specifically, it addressed the following research questions:

- 1) What is the demographic and professional profile of the respondents in terms of Generational Cohort (derived from age), Area of Assignment, and Years of Clinical Experience in Special Care Units?
- 2) What is the level of work attitudes of the respondents across the generational cohorts, as measured by Organizational Commitment, Work-Life Balance, Authority and Feedback, and Technological Adaptability?
- 3) What is the perceived level of nursing practice in the Special Care Units among the respondents in terms of technical competence, interprofessional communication, patient safety, and advocacy?

Scope and Delimitations

Total enumeration of 61 regular registered nurses (≥ 6 months tenure). Four Special Care Units, such as the ICU, OR, HD, and ER, at a Secondary Hospital in Bulacan. Generational work attitudes are organizational commitment, work-life balance, authority/feedback, and technological adaptability. Areas of nursing practice are technical competence, communication, and patient safety. General wards, outpatient clinics, pediatric units, and administrative roles are isolated high-acuity workload and stress profiles.

Review of Related Literature

The study frames nursing practice through independent generational work attitudes—encompassing organizational commitment, work-life balance, authority and feedback response, and technological adaptability—which vary significantly from traditional loyalty to modern digital integration. These attitudes directly influence the dependent variable of nursing practice, measured by technical competence, interprofessional communication, and patient safety advocacy within high-acuity environments. Grounded in local nursing literature and standard competencies, this framework highlights how bridging generational work values is essential for optimizing critical care delivery and nurse retention.

Theoretical Framework

This study integrates Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring and Strauss-Howe's Generational Theory. Watson's framework provides the ethical foundation, viewing generational work values as internal dispositions that directly influence caring behaviors, communication, and patient advocacy through her Caritas Processes. Complementarily, Strauss and Howe's theory accounts for the sociocultural origins of cohort differences, demonstrating how distinct generational traits systematically influence how nurses collaborate and deliver care in high-stress environments.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework utilizes an Input-Process-Output (IPO) model, driven by Strauss & Howe's Generational Theory and Watson's Caring Theory, to examine nurse profiles, work attitudes, and clinical practice levels. The process involves collecting structured survey data and applying descriptive and inferential statistics—including ANOVA and Pearson's r —to analyze differences and correlations across generational cohorts. Ultimately, the output delivers empirical findings that inform a proposed Generational Synergy Program

designed to optimize collaboration, patient safety, and clinical outcomes across multigenerational nursing teams.

METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodological approach that will inform the study of the association between generational work attitudes and nursing practice. It includes the design, location, sampling, and ethical protection processes adopted to uphold data integrity.

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative, non-experimental, descriptive-correlational design with purposive sampling among registered nurses in Special Care Units (ICU, OR, HD, ER) at a private hospital in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan. The descriptive component assesses demographic profiles, generational work attitudes, and nursing practice levels, while the correlational component evaluates differences across age cohorts and tests associations between work attitudes and practice outcomes. Independent variables include work attitudes—organizational commitment, work-life balance, authority dynamics, and technological flexibility—while dependent variables measure nursing practice competence, interprofessional communication, patient safety, job satisfaction, and burnout.

Research Steps

Data will be gathered using a validated three-part structured questionnaire:

Part I: Professional and Demographic Profile (Generation Cohort (Will be derived from age), Unit, Length of Experience).

Part II: Generational Work Attitudes Scale, utilizing a 5-point Likert scale to measure commitment, balance, and tech-adaptability.

Part III: Nursing Practice Assessment Scale, utilizing a 5-point frequency scale to evaluate interprofessional communication and technical competence.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The data collection process will be conducted ethically across the ICU, OR, HD, and ER, beginning with approvals from the Ethics Review Board, the research adviser, and the hospital Chief Operating Officer. Following administrative clearance, voluntary informed consent will be obtained from participating nurses in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, with no compensation provided. Over a three-week period, a digital survey link and QR code will be distributed during shift endorsements to capture all rotating shifts while minimizing disruption to clinical operations.

Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis will be systematically structured around the Statement of the Problem using specific descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Frequency and percentage distributions will outline the nurses' demographic profiles, while weighted means will evaluate the levels of generational work attitudes and nursing practice across Likert scales. To address differences and associations, a One-Way ANOVA will analyze variations in work attitudes across generational cohorts, and Pearson's r will measure the relationship between work attitudes and nursing practice levels. Finally, the proposed Generational Synergy Program requires no statistical treatment, as its framework will be derived directly from the empirical findings.

Research Hypotheses and Validation

This section outlines the study's null and alternative hypotheses alongside the instrument validation process. The hypothesis test for significant differences in work attitudes across generational cohorts (H0/H1) evaluates the relationship between generational work attitudes and nursing practice levels (H0/H1). To ensure data integrity, the three-part instrument underwent content validation by an expert panel in nursing administration and face validation through pilot testing with SCU nurses for clarity and contextual relevance.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This study acknowledges key limitations, including potential self-report bias, a single-site geographic scope in Bulacan that limits generalizability, and a non-causal correlational design that identifies relationships rather than cause and effect. Ethically, the research strictly adheres to the principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and veracity through voluntary electronic consent and minimal workflow disruption. Furthermore, the study maintained full compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173) by anonymizing all responses and analyzing data strictly in aggregate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic profile reveals an early-career workforce composed predominantly of Generation Z (52.46%) and Millennials (42.62%), distributed across the OR, ICU, HD, and ER. While nurses demonstrated high technological adaptability and exceptional clinical practice—led by interprofessional communication ($M = 4.75$) and patient safety ($M = 4.68$)—organizational commitment recorded a lower intent for long-term retention. Inferential testing confirmed a significant positive correlation between work attitudes and nursing practice ($r = .271$, $p = .034$), though regression analysis indicates that clinical experience and organizational culture influence these attitudes far more than age alone.

SUMMARY

The SCU workforce is predominantly early-career Gen Z and Millennial nurses who exhibit strong technological adaptability and high clinical performance, particularly in interprofessional communication and patient safety, alongside neutral long-term retention intent. Statistical analysis confirms that positive work attitudes significantly enhance clinical nursing practice, though cohort differences are driven more by clinical experience and organizational culture than by age alone. Ultimately, optimizing care in high-acuity units relies on addressing baseline generational expectations through a supportive culture that balances clinical experience with retention strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals that the SCU workforce consists predominantly of early-career Generation Z and Millennial nurses who possess positive work attitudes—notably in technological adaptability and feedback—alongside strong clinical competence in communication, technical skill, and patient safety. While significant attitude differences exist across cohorts, regression indicates that clinical experience and unit culture drive these variations rather than age alone. Ultimately, the confirmed positive correlation between work attitudes and clinical practice provides the empirical foundation for the proposed Generational

Synergy Program to boost retention, collaboration, and patient care in high-acuity environments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the proposed Generational Synergy Program integrates structured mentorship, continuous simulation-based training, and flexible workplace policies to bridge technical competence gaps, align with strong work-life balance preferences, and enhance retention among early-career nurses. Second, feedback-oriented leadership training and targeted recognition strategies leverage younger cohorts' preference for structured evaluations and clear career pathways to boost long-term organizational commitment. Finally, ongoing intergenerational workshops and reinforced communication frameworks like SBAR strengthen team collaboration, minimize friction, and sustain high standards of patient safety across SCUs.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

I acknowledge the use of Microsoft Copilot to translate text and edit grammar. The core substance of this work—specifically the arguments and system architecture—is original. I accept full accountability for the final output, including verification of all facts and data.

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